



Embassy of the United States of America
Port Louis, Mauritius
PRESS RELEASE

They have a dream for Mauritius

Port Louis, January 30, 2013: The Embassy of the United States of America and the Harper Lee Centre (American Corner), in collaboration with the Municipal Council of Curepipe, hosted a competition for high schools of Curepipe (South), at the Town Hall of Curepipe, to mark the 50th anniversary of the "I have a dream" speech and Martin Luther King Day. Participants delivered presentations/skits/talks on the theme: "My Dream for Mauritius".

St Joseph College and Hindu Girls College won the first prize ex aequo. And, the participants from the Imperial College won the third prize. Forest Side State Secondary School (Girls) got an honorable mention. The participants were judged on five criterias: creativity, originality, contextualization, delivery and content. The panel members included Ambassador Shari Villarosa, Father Filip Fanchette, Chairman of the Nelson Mandela Center for African Culture, Belinda Ramnauth, director of the National Library, Amilcar Veerapen, member of the Embassy Youth Council and Nicole Thornton, American Fulbright student currently researching the African Diaspora.

All those students, ages sixteen to seventeen, shared their dream for Mauritius, their dream for their future. But as Ambassador Shari Villarosa noted, all those students also highlighted the challenges facing Mauritius, just as Martin Luther King Jr. did with the United States in his famous speech in 1963. And as Ambassador Villarosa said, once we state the problems, we can address them. The Ambassador reminded the audience that last week, on Monday, January 21, *"we witnessed inauguration of President Barack Obama for a second-term, on the same day designated to commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. declaring 'our journey is not complete'"*.

"President Obama, she said, urged an unwavering course toward prosperity and freedom for all our citizens and for the protection of the social safety net that has sheltered the poor, elderly and needy." Ambassador Shari Villarosa added: *"Putting President Obama's words in context, you, as citizens of the Republic of Mauritius have the power to set your country's course. You have the power to contribute to the sustainable development of Mauritius. You have the power to shape the current debates – on electoral reform, good governance, accountability, equal opportunity, and social justice. Future leaders of the Republic of Mauritius, I know you have dreams for your country. Now is time to pursue them."*

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Their dream, the participants shared it through presentations, skits and talks performed in front of the panel, the Mayor of Curepipe, Mario Bienvenue, teachers and fellow students. The presentation prepared by the students from Hindu Girls was a mix of speaking and acting. An advocacy for the future of a Mauritius with no color, no gender, an empowered Mauritian who has a dream for Mauritius. A dream where all Mauritians are equal, have access to education and employment and live in a healthy and safe environment. The boys from St Joseph College had a dream, a *"song to sing"*. Through some speaking, a rap song written by them, they shared their dream for one united nation. As for the boys of Imperial College, they put together a sketch about an electoral debate between the Dreamers Party and the Prosperity Party. The candidate of the Dreamers Party being a woman and the one from the Prosperity Party, a corrupted old man. The dream of those boys was that a woman could win the elections some years from now.

The participating schools were: Mauritius College (Girls), Imperial College, Loreto College Curepipe, St Joseph College, Hindu Girls College, Forest Side State Secondary School (Girls), Forest Side State Secondary School (Boys), France Boyer de la Giroday, Mauritius College (Boys and Girls) and Dunputh Lallah State Secondary School.

About Martin Luther King Jr.

Born Michael King Jr., in Atlanta, Georgia, he started university at 15, and went to Morehouse, UPenn, Boston University and Harvard, amongst others. Leader of the civil rights movement that drastically altered the U.S. He was amongst the youngest ever nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. He draws some of his influence from Gandhi. Using the six concepts of cadence, context, authenticity, practice, repetition and connection, Dr. King perfected his speeches. His famous "I Have a dream" speech was given in 1963 in front of the Lincoln memorial, after the protest for jobs and civil rights, to an audience of over 200,000 people. This created the political momentum that would result in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibiting segregation in public locations, educational institutions and employment. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, April 4th, 1968. MLK Day is held on the third Monday of January.

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